



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Restrain Your Children*

*National Child Passenger Safety Week — September 19–25, 2010*

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*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Driving with kids in a car can be a trying experience, but it can be disastrous if your children aren't properly restrained. Motor-vehicle crashes are among the leading cause of death among children in the United States. Appropriate use of safety devices can prevent many of these deaths.

Dr. Arlene Greenspan is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of properly using safety devices for children in motor vehicles. Welcome to the show, Arlene.

[Dr. Greenspan] Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, how many children are injured or killed each year in motor-vehicle crashes?

[Dr. Greenspan] Each year, about 550 children ages birth through eight are killed in motor vehicle crashes. This translates to about 10 children every week. In addition, about 220,000 children are seen in emergency rooms each year for injuries they suffer from motor vehicle crashes.

[Dr. Gaynes] So what are the age and weight limits for these child safety seats?

[Dr. Greenspan] Knowing which type of seat your child needs to sit in can be confusing. Generally, children should be in rear-facing seats until they reach the age of one and 20 pounds. At that point, children should move into a forward-facing car seat. Kids usually stay in forward-facing car seats until they reach about four years and 40 pounds. At that time, they move into a booster seat. Children then stay in a booster seat until they are four feet nine inches tall, which is at about eight years. However, these are minimum criteria. It is best to keep your child in his or her current seat until they reach the age or height limits of that seat. To find out the most appropriate seat for your child, go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and type in the search box "Keep Them Safe."

[Dr. Gaynes] How effective are safety seats and seat belts in preventing injuries and deaths to young children?

[Dr. Greenspan] Car safety seats and seat belts are very effective in preventing deaths and injuries due to car crashes. In fact, infants and toddlers that use appropriate car seats reduce their risk of death by approximately 70 percent. Children that are appropriately placed in booster seats reduce their risk of injury by 59 percent compared to using seat belts alone.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, are children required by law in all states to be placed in safety seats?

[Dr. Greenspan] All states have laws that require children to be in car seats. However, laws vary greatly by state. Regardless of your state law, we recommend that all children remain in car and then booster seats until they are at least eight years old or four foot nine inches tall.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most common mistakes parents make when using safety devices to restrain children?

[Dr. Greenspan] There are several mistakes that parents make when using car safety seats. First, parents often move their child into the next stage of car seat too early. Second, parents make mistakes in the way they install car seats. And third, parents may strap their children into the car seat either too loosely or incorrectly. We recommend that parents take their children to a certified car inspection station which can provide information on correctly installing and correctly using safety seats. The website I referred to before can also help you find the nearest inspection station. Once again, that website is [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and then type “Keep Them Safe” in the search box.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks Arlene. I’ve been talking today with CDC’s Dr. Arlene Greenspan about the importance of properly using safety devices for children in motor vehicles.

Taking time to appropriately use safety devices can help prevent injuries and deaths among children. However, incorrect use can make them less effective. Check with your local authorities for advice on how to best protect *your* children in a motor vehicle.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.